

The "Full Dinner Pail" in a Great City---See Chicago Tribune

In its issue of April 19, the Chicago Tribune printed an interesting editorial entitled "The distribution of incomes." Following is the closing paragraph from the editorial:

"President Wright of Clarke college has given it as his opinion that in America the question, 'Are the rich growing richer and the poor poorer?' probably may be answered thus: The rich are growing richer, many more are growing rich, and the poor are growing better off. This refers to American conditions."

But in the same issue of the Tribune in which this editorial appeared we find an article entitled "Men starve in South Chicago; sleep in barns and sheds." That article was as follows:

The shadow of starvation is hovering over 1,000 aliens in South Chicago. In the vicinity of the Illinois steel mills, on the Strand, Green Bay avenue, and Buffalo avenue there are close to 5,000 men out of work. About 4,000 of the total number still have some money, some have credit with their friends, neighbors, and labor agents, and manage to get along somehow. They live on 8 cents, and a great many on five cents, a day. But they live. They have at least enough money with which to buy a loaf of bread every day. This bread, with water and salt, and occasionally an onion or piece of garlic, makes a meal at breakfast—dinner and supper are cut out.

There are 1,000 or thereabouts who have no money and no credit. They live on a slice of bread which they get from one friend or another. Not infrequently that friend himself is penniless. The slice of bread which he gives away spoils his meal and leaves him half hungry. But he gives it away, anyhow. He will not eat bread to satiety when his friend is famished.

CANNOT PAY ROOM RENT

Rent, of course, these 1,000 men cannot pay. But the boarding house keeper is often willing to let them stay. He could make no use of the room where they sleep. There are no other roomers to be had. Still, several boarding house keepers have ejected numerous of their former patrons. And this resulted in the turning of alley woodsheds and barns into lodging houses. Incidentally, too, this resulted in some of these wakeful lodgers becoming desperate and laying hands on whatever came within their reach.

The large number of out of work people has affected the business of that district. Clothing stores do not make one-third the sales they made last year at this time. Even grocers and butchers have had their business slashed in half. People have no money and they don't buy.

The barber shops in the neighborhood which generally are kept busy, are empty now from morning until evening. Sometimes a couple of men, badly in need of a shave, come in. But they do not shave. They merely come in to play a game of cards with the barber, who perhaps is a fellow-countryman of theirs. They come in also to find out from the barber what the papers say about work, for the barber is generally considered to be a worldly man who reads the papers.

HARD LINES FOR THE LANDLORD

The greatest sufferers next to the men who are starving are some of the boarding house keepers. They suffer with the men. When the men have money and have plenty to eat the keeper of the boarding house is prosperous. When the boarders face starvation the boarding house keeper is facing bankruptcy. He is more or less responsible for his boarders—responsible in dollars and cents to the butcher, the baker, the grocer where he bought the provisions for his boarders "on the hook," and the bills he is now unable to meet.

"The boarding house keeper," one agent declared, "has more at stake than the other of our workpeople. I know here several men who kept these boarding houses and are now nearly \$2,000 behind. The owner of a boarding house generally keeps men who come from the same village with him. He is not afraid of them. He trusts them. Now, however, when the boarders are unable to pay their bills, it is he who is responsible. He is the loser. Several boarding house keepers went to their respective consuls the other day to ask aid, but they failed to get any satisfaction.

"Many, in fact, most of the people—would gladly go back to the old country if they had money to go with. But they have not. Nearly

every one of them, too, has some debts to pay off, debts which have accumulated during the five months of out of work. Many immigrants who had money have left for the old world in the last few days."

TALKING ALWAYS OF WORK

A visit to some of these boarding houses revealed scenes of wretchedness, of mental and physical agony, as well as of fortitude and nobleness of heart of which only men who have still retained their tribal ties and instincts are capable. In one house about twenty men were sitting in a room and talking, talking always about one thing—how to get work. Every now and then one man would come in and another would go out. The man who came in from the labor agent's office, bringing the news that there was no sign of work. The man who left went to the agent's office. He knew, of course, that he would not find work. But he went to sniff the air of the office, as it were, to get into the atmosphere where work is spoken of, where work is sometimes gotten.

"Tell them," a boarding house keeper said when he learned the visitor's mission, "tell them that the men will take work at any price under any conditions. They will work even if the pay is small. If the wages will only suffice them to buy food they will work for it. I have been completely ruined this winter. All these men owe me money. They owe me more than a thousand dollars. They will, of course, pay it back. I know them all. They are good people. But until they get ready to pay it back I will have to go begging.

"The grocer won't trust me any more. I owe him a great deal as it is. To the butcher I have not gone for a long time. We are glad if we have enough bread. Many of the people around here have not even bread. They simply are famished. They walk about the streets or go into a saloon. But here they are not welcome. Their credit, if they ever had any credit there, long since has been exhausted. If the people around here don't get work I don't know what we will do."

WAITING AT THE LABOR BUREAU

The office of a labor agent on Ninetieth street contained about forty people, all of whom were anxiously waiting for some news of work. Every letter that the agent opened was watched by these men with breathless attention, as if their lives hung on the contents of that letter. As soon as the agent perused the letter and told them that there was nothing there for them, the crowd went out, and inside of ten minutes another crowd of forty or fifty people were waiting for further news and gossiping so as to pass the time away.

The faces of these men were a study for both psychologist and artist. A Vereshagin would find abundant material here for painting of untold horrors. The horrors of war are in a way mitigated by the excitement—by the roar of cannons and the din of drums. The horrors of out of work have no background, no frame. They are there in their massive ugliness, portentous and terrible. The furrowed faces, unwashed and unkempt heads, with the wild and sparkling eyes, excite as much pity as they do apprehension.

Slow as these people are in getting the news and doings of the country, they are alert in matters pertaining to their own interest—to work. Thus a newspaper containing a statement that a certain corporation employing close to 200,000 men, mostly immigrants, had decided to employ Americans only henceforth, gained circulation in South Chicago in almost no time. Crowds of people thronged the office of one of the labor agents and asked him to explain just what the paper said and meant. When the agent was through explaining in Macedonian, Servian, Bulgarian, Montenegrin, and a dozen or more kindred languages, the men asked to see the paper. Each in their turn glanced at the piece of news which was enclosed in a circle by the agent's blue pencil. They gazed and gazed at the paper trying to look into the secret, to solve the puzzle which these words contained.

HAD NOT EATEN ALL DAY

A man about 26, six feet tall and weighing perhaps 175 pounds, was found standing on a street corner watching the flames leaping from the converter of the steel mills. His face looked like a piece of leather. It evidently had

not seen soap for a long while. His clothes were shabby in the extreme and the shoes were held together by "home made" patches and stitches. When asked what troubled him he replied faintly that he had no work.

Another minute's talk revealed that the man had not eaten that day, although it was evening. He explained that he had no one to borrow from. He had borrowed from nearly every one he knew in the last few months. Now his friends are looking for some one from whom to borrow a nickel or dime. He was waiting here, he explained, for a man whom he knew but slightly. That man was working and he hoped to be able to borrow a few cents and buy bread.

The man was offered a dime. He could hardly believe it at first. Then he took it, gazed at the coin wistfully and after profuse thanks ran off to the nearby grocery, emerging a minute later with a large loaf of black bread.

SHARE LAST PENNIES WITH NEIGHBOR

"Solid character is the only thing which prevents many of the immigrants in this neighborhood from starving or else from becoming criminals," said a business man living in that district. "There are a thousand people here now who are without means, without a cent with which to buy their next day's bread. They would have starved or been criminals long ago if they had not lived in this congested neighborhood among their own people. Here they are helped. They are given food. They are given money, even if it is only two pennies, with which to buy rolls.

"If they have no money to give to a poorer friend or acquaintance, many of the people in this neighborhood simply will give him a few slices of bread. Nor is this charity. It simply is necessity with them. They still adhere to some of the primal customs and conceptions of justice between man and his neighbor. I know many men who are working and earning about \$9 a week. On this money they keep from two to four of their friends who are out of work."

BUSINESS FALLS OFF 50 PER CENT

The extent to which this large number of out of work people has affected the business men is seen in the statement of the proprietor of a large grocery and meat market on Green Bay avenue.

"Our business," the man said, "has fallen off from 50 to 70 per cent and there is no telling how much more it will fall within the next few weeks. During the winter months we kept on selling groceries and meats on the hook, as we always do. We hoped that in the spring, when work started up, they would pay it up. Now, however, spring has come and there is little improvement. We were compelled therefore to quit selling on credit. If we were to keep on we would simply go bankrupt.

"With the cutting down of credit the business has been cut down enormously. People simply buy the bare necessities, such as bread, salt and matches. A herring is bought occasionally. But meat hardly is touched by a number of my customers who used to call for large meat orders daily. I don't know what it will come to. But I simply will not sell on credit to anyone. Credit at this time would put me out of business on short notice."



INSTRUCTED DELEGATIONS

It is, perhaps, too much to expect the Milwaukee Sentinel to be either fair or honest in its editorial expressions when Mr. Bryan is the subject of discussion. The Sentinel's intimation that Mr. Bryan has asked that delegates be instructed for him is so utterly at variance with the facts that one wonders that even the Sentinel would dare to print it. Mr. Bryan has advised the instruction of delegates, not for himself, but in accordance with the wishes of a majority of the rank and file of the democratic party in the various states. Delegates are supposed to voice the sentiments of the voters who elect them, and a delegate ought not object to receiving and acting upon instructions.

The Sentinel's references to "the Bryan gasbag," and to "Mr. Bryan's self-spun fabric of pretension to celestial virtue and oracular wisdom" reveal clearly the very fair and impartial view the Sentinel takes of public questions, and explains clearly why the Sentinel can not be honest when referring editorially to Mr. Bryan.